

Commissioner's UPDATE

News from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

May — June 2004



A Message
from
Bradley M.
Campbell,
Commissioner

Whether they go to swim, sunbathe, fish or just enjoy the ocean breeze, millions of people worldwide have made the Jersey shore one of the nation's most popular destinations. At the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), we know our treasured marine environment is fragile, and keeping it healthy and safe requires constant vigilance.

Under the leadership of Governor James E. McGreevey, we are taking action to safeguard the environmental, recreational and economic value of our coastal resources.

Our goals are ambitious, but we are making headway — thanks to bipartisan support from elected officials on all levels of government; county and local health officers; and dedicated members of Clean Ocean Action, Jersey Shore Partnership, the American Littoral Society and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, among others.

By continuing to work together, we can succeed in strengthening protection of our ocean for future generations and fostering better stewardship of the wealth of natural resources along our coast.

Bradley M. Campbell

Coastal initiative reflects Governor McGreevey's commitment to protecting NJ's ocean resources

Improving water quality, limiting development, increasing recreational opportunities and boosting fish and shellfish stocks are among the key proposals outlined in the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) sweeping initiative to protect, restore and enhance New Jersey's coastal resources and its marine environment.

The DEP's coastal protection initiative reflects Governor James E. McGreevey's commitment to safeguarding the integrity of New Jersey's precious coastal and ocean resources for future generations. At the Governor's direction, the DEP developed the initiative in response to the 2003 Pew Oceans Commission report, "America's Living Oceans: Charting a Course for Sea Change." Based on a three-year study of the nation's ocean resources — the first of its kind in more than 30 years — the Pew report painted a grim picture of the crisis facing the nation's oceans.

In its initiative, the DEP proposed more than 40 recommendations that address coastal habitat, water quality, coastal development and public access, marine fisheries and shellfisheries, and data sharing, and include options for state and federal legislative action.

Seeking public comment on the initiative, DEP Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell in April led two open meetings, which drew more than 170 people

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At a public meeting led by Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell (left) and Rep. Frank Pallone, Ralph Coscia, president of Citizens Right to Access Beaches, and Cindy Zipf, executive director of Clean Ocean Action, were among those who offered comment on the DEP's coastal protection initiative.

DEP unveils possible solutions for Wreck Pond

The DEP has proposed a four-point plan to address water-quality problems in Spring Lake Borough's Wreck Pond, which has caused most of New Jersey's beach closings in recent years.

In a public meeting with Spring Lake officials and residents on May 17, DEP Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell proposed the immediate undertaking of a Regional Stormwater Management Plan to identify and address nonpoint sources of pollution in the Wreck Pond watershed. He also proposed the extension of the pond's outfall pipe, comprehensive wildlife management strategies, and dredging of the pond.

Before finalizing an action plan, the DEP is considering the public comment on the Wreck Pond proposals, which will require additional funding, an extended timetable for completion, and extensive operations and truck traffic at the pond.

Surfriders honor Campbell

DEP Commissioner Bradley M. Campbell has earned the Keeper of the Coast award, presented annually by the Surfrider Foundation's Jersey Shore Chapter, in recognition of his exceptional leadership and commitment to protecting New Jersey's coastal areas.



New map will identify NJ's best ocean fishing areas

Every year, the ocean waters off the famed Jersey shore attract more than 571,000 saltwater anglers.

The sensitive habitat of marine fish requires strong protection from the potentially adverse effects of industrial activities such as sand mining, and oil and gas exploration. To properly assess the impact of industrial activities or development projects on New Jersey's marine environment, government agencies and environmental business consultants need specific information about the location of our ocean's living resources.

To that end, the DEP launched an initiative to map the state's living marine resources, beginning with prime recreational ocean fishing areas. The mapping initiative is consistent with Governor James E. McGreevey's efforts to balance strengthened protection of New Jersey's ocean waters with the use of marine resources for economic benefits.

Supported by a federal coastal zone management grant, the project focused on interviews with 100 experienced and knowledgeable party- and charter-fishing boat captains who helped the DEP map more than 450 prime ocean areas favored by recreational anglers. Each fishing ground was plotted on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) nautical charts, and the information will be entered into the DEP's computerized Geographic Information System, widely used to map natural resources and development on land.

The DEP also plans to make this information available on its Web site later this year. The prime ocean fishing grounds charts should prove helpful both to saltwater anglers and to those involved in planning and assessing ocean-related development projects.

Future marine-resource mapping will include prime commercial fishing grounds, fish distributions, shellfish beds and shipwrecks.

Make a splash, become a lifeguard

Spend the summer enjoying the warmth of the sun and the wonderful landscapes of New Jersey's state parks, forests and recreation areas, while performing admirable public service.

The DEP's Division of Parks and Forestry is recruiting lifeguards for State Park Service swimming areas. Testing, training and certification are provided free of charge. Learn valuable life-saving skills including administering first aid and CPR.

Applicants must be 16 years of age or older. No previous experience is required. For more information, visit any State Park Service area office or call Gerry Davies at (609) 984-0370.

Cleaner beaches are shore to please summer visitors - thanks to caring volunteers

When company's coming – say, several million people – good hosts tidy up. But that's only part of the reason hundreds of volunteers fan out along the Jersey shore every spring to collect and cart away a couple tons of litter and other debris from the beaches.

Mostly, these volunteers care about keeping New Jersey's shore clean and safe and protecting its living ocean resources. To demonstrate their commitment, they participate in the DEP's Adopt A Beach program.

Every year, the DEP's Adopt A Beach program holds two statewide coastal cleanups, one in the spring and the other during fall. Volunteers agree to adopt a New Jersey beach for at least one year and to clean their selected section of shoreline on two designated cleanup days. Many of the current 1,790 Adopt A Beach volunteers, who represent 60 organizations, have participated in the DEP program since its inception in 1993.

During the two statewide DEP beach sweeps in 2003, volunteers plucked from the coastline a total of 50,437 pieces of trash and debris that tipped the scales at 8,204 pounds, slightly more than four tons. Cigarette butts accounted for more than 25 percent of the total count, followed by bottle caps and cup lids (14 percent) and beverage straws and stirrers (11 percent).

Detailed information on this year's spring beach sweep is being compiled now. Adopt A Beach's next beach cleanup will be held this fall.

New volunteers are always welcome. For more information, call (609) 29-BEACH.

Monitoring ocean water quality is key to protecting public health on beaches

Even before Memorial Day ushered in the unofficial start of summer, the DEP's work to protect public health on New Jersey's beaches was well under way.

This year, the DEP began monitoring water quality of recreational beaches and aerial surveillance of New Jersey's Atlantic Ocean coastline on May 24. During the summer, water-quality monitoring is done routinely on Mondays and throughout the week as needed at 187 ocean monitoring stations, as part of the Cooperative Coastal Monitoring Program administered by the DEP, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and local environmental health agencies.

This summer, New Jersey is using a new bacterial indicator to test the quality of New Jersey's marine waters. The switch to enterococcus from fecal coliform became effective in April, as mandated by the federal Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act of 2000. The law required New Jersey and other states with coastal recreational beaches to adopt revised ocean water-quality standards.

The revised standard is based on scientific studies that showed enterococci are best suited for predicting the presence of pathogens that can cause illness. Because enterococci are more persistent in the environment than fecal coliform, low enterococci counts signify cleaner water.

Beautiful Barney

Sporting a new coat of paint, part of a \$500,000 restoration DEP completed last fall, historic Barnegat Lighthouse awaits scores of summer visitors who will want to climb the tower's 217 steps to enjoy a panoramic view of Island Beach State Park, Barnegat Bay, and Long Beach Island.



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Coastal initiative

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including state and local officials representing New Jersey's coastal communities, environmental and fishing advocates, and concerned citizens. Joining Campbell for the first meeting in Pomona was U.S. Senator Jon Corzine and Rep. Frank LoBiondo, and at the second in West Long Branch, Rep. Frank Pallone.

In addition to sharing ideas on how best to manage and protect New Jersey's ocean resources, participants expressed support for the DEP proposals and voiced concerns about dredging, offshore drilling, stormwater runoff and coastal development. The public comment is being used to shape the DEP's coastal protection initiative and also was incorporated into Governor McGreevey's response to a preliminary ocean-policy report released in April by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.

In its 500-page report, the federal commission addressed a wide range of issues including stewardship of marine resources, pollution prevention, and enhancing and supporting marine science, commerce and transportation. The 16-member commission also proposed the creation of a National Ocean Council, doubling the nation's investment in ocean research, and greater emphasis on ocean education efforts, among other recommendations.

After reviewing state governors' responses and other stakeholders' comments, which were due June 4, the federal commission is expected to send its final report to Congress and the White House.

For more information on the DEP's coastal protection programs, visit www.nj.gov/dep/cmp.

Monitoring ocean water quality

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A test result showing enterococci levels higher than the standard of 104 enterococci per 100 milliliters of water will trigger a second sampling. If the second round of testing also shows enterococci levels higher than 104, the affected beach will be closed until further sampling determines bacteria levels pose no public health threat.

Bathing-beach water with a high enterococci level can cause illness, the most common of which is gastroenteritis. Its symptoms include stomachache, nausea, headache or diarrhea.

Polluted runoff is the number-one threat to ocean water quality in New Jersey and often is the source of high bacteria levels. In January, New Jersey demonstrated Governor James E. McGreevey's commitment to cleaner water and a healthier ocean when it adopted comprehensive stormwater regulations that represent the nation's strongest water-quality standards.

The public can get the latest, most accurate information on beach water quality by calling (800) 648-SAND or by visiting NJBeaches.org.

It's a shore thing

You can help protect New Jersey's beaches and ocean water quality by purchasing the "Shore to Please" license plate, featuring historic Barnegat Lighthouse. Proceeds provide funding for several key environmental programs including Adopt A Beach, Clean Shores and coastal surveillance flights to spot pollution sources. Get the special plates by visiting any Motor Vehicle Agency or by calling (888) 486-3339.